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Grassley Seeks Fair Trade Treatment, Compensation for Farmers

WASHINGTON – Sen. Chuck Grassley, a leader of the Committee on Finance, today urged passage of a bipartisan bill he has co-sponsored to make farmers eligible for assistance through a federal trade law that compensates workers when they are hurt by international trade.

“This effort is bipartisan. And its goal is to provide fair treatment to farmers under the trade act,” Grassley said. “Right now, when imports cause layoffs in manufacturing industries, workers are eligible for compensation, but when imports adversely affect the ag sector, farmers who lose income receive no compensation.”

Last month, Grassley and Sen. Kent Conrad of North Dakota re-introduced their bill, the *Trade Adjustment Assistance for Farmers Act* (S. 1100) to amend the *Trade Act of 1974* to improve assistance for farmers. Grassley urged his colleagues to make the bill part of the federal trade adjustment assistance program. Grassley’s comments came during a Finance Committee hearing on trade adjustment assistance. The Grassley-Conrad bill:

- ▶ authorizes a group of agricultural commodity producers to petition the Secretary of Agriculture for a certification of eligibility to apply for trade adjustment assistance;
- ▶ requires the Secretary to determine whether the petitioning group meets certain requirements and, if so, to issue such a certification;
- ▶ requires the International Trade Commission to notify the Secretary immediately whenever it begins an investigation into whether an agricultural commodity is being imported into the United States in such increased quantities as to be a substantial cause or threat of serious injury to a domestic industry producing an agricultural commodity like or directly competitive with the imported agricultural commodity;
- ▶ directs the Secretary to provide agricultural commodity producers with information about trade adjustment assistance petition and application procedures, benefit allowances, training, and other employment services;
- ▶ sets forth certain eligibility requirements for the payment of trade adjustment assistance to adversely affected agricultural commodity producers;
- ▶ limits to \$10,000 the maximum annual amount of cash benefits a producer may receive;
- ▶ provides for the repayment and recovery of overpayments of trade adjustment assistance made to such producers due to fraud;
- ▶ and sets forth penalties for such fraud.

“Our bill would make sure that farmers recover a portion of the income lost due to import competition,” Grassley said. “In fact, when President John F. Kennedy first envisioned the trade adjustment assistance program he said it should help farmers. The unfortunate reality is that family farmers never really qualify for the program. Our bill would make sure they do.”

